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ABSTRACT

General education is structured across subject matter disciplines and is designed to provide the student with skills and knowledge which will allow him or her to function in society. Inherent in the philosophy of general education is the belief that higher education should be egalitarian. This philosophy is opposed, historically, to liberal education which was designed to serve a citizenry in a master/slave relationship. By philosophy, objectives, and activity, the community college provides programs for various student groups in line with the aim of general education. This attitude shows up the fallacy of meritocracy as the sole criterion for participating in higher education. However, an egalitarian classless society exists in an unclear environment as general education must be truly general since the aims and goals of institutions, societies, and individuals are less well-defined than in the past. A basic question always tends to arise--should the college be in the business of teaching students how to read and write? And more specifically, how does an institution convince the student of the worth of general education with much of its classical liberal arts content? As such the study of literature, history, and science must be made more relevant to contemporary problem solving and not be limited to those in esoteric studies. Similarly, there needs to be a desegregating of vocational students from general education. (Author/MB)

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THE ROLE OF GENERAL EDUCATION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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General education is in renaissance. When approaching the subject and seeking a way to place it in some functional context, one is tempted to psychologize, to scantily translate the suffering, expressions and contradictions of turbulent times. Yet no times have been free of turbulence. Only their nature and severity are variant. There is the urge to resort to the idiom of change, a concept that has suffered excessive verbal manipulation. It is difficult, in fact, to circumvent the artificialities of prior data, behaviors, methodologies and conceptualizations related to general education which attract stereotypical associations. It is equally as difficult, therefore, not to restate the obvious, plagiarize the insights of others or to succumb to one's own prior utterances.

While the foregoing may seem laced with a kind of academic cynicism and perhaps an implied questioning of one's own discomfort and competency in dealing with the subject, there are, in fact, objective and uncompromising problems, principles and opportunities inherent in both the study and the application of general education, especially as these phenomena relate to the community college.

THE ROLE OF GENERAL EDUCATION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A point of departure for any discussion is logically a definition of terms. A definition establishes a commonality of reference, clarifies the language and facilitates the communication. From the outset, then, the term "general education" requires an explicit explanation.

General Education: A Definition

General education is that form of learning experiences structured across subject matter disciplines designed to provide the student with a set of skills and knowledges which will allow him or her to function in the society. It operates on the premise that no subject exists in isolation from every other as it impacts upon human existence. More specifically, it exposes the individual to both cognitive and affective experiences. The former prepares the student in the basic academic skills. These are competencies that the student must master if he is to function efficiently in the society. They are also prequisites necessary if the learner is to master more complex learnings and problem solving activities. The latter teaches the learner to be aware of feelings, attitudes, values, appreciations, loyalities and commitment. It provides an alternative learning process which allows the student to gain knowledge by a different learning modality other than cognitive ones.

Knowing what a thing is and what it does may not provide a particular system of principles for the conduct of the activity nor a treatise covering such a system. A definition neither provides goals nor basic assumptions. This observation is certainly defensible in the field of education. Central to the examination of any form of education is an understanding of the

philosophical underpinnings.

Philosophy of General Education

A statement of philosophy is the statement about a belief and value system. Inherent in the philosophy of general education is the belief that higher education should be egalitarian; that is, it should be available to everyone who wishes to participate. In this way it is compatible with community college goals and purposes. A second tenent of general education is the belief that the education should be beneficial to the individual as well as to the society. With regard to the individual, it should provide the person with the skills which will allow him or her to become economically efficient, socially responsible, capable of making wise choices with regard to understanding and using the democratic process, and which will allow the person not only to appreciate and preserve old ways, customs and traditions, but also to petition and pressure for their change when they become dysfunctional. In addition, the philosophy recognizes that the individual who values work, accepts civic responsibility and is socially involved is also an individual who responds to the aesthetic. It views appreciation as a learned phenomenon. Philosophies do not simply evolve they have historical matrices.

Historical Considerations

Historically, general education has suffered a kind of academic ambiguity. It has been identified with liberal education as though the two forms of education were synonomous. While liberal and general education are not identical, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. From the outset, however, it is important to distinguish one from the other. Liberal education emerged among the societies of antiquity -- notably the Greeks.

It was designed to serve a clearly delineated citizenry organized in a master/slave configuration -- the rulers and the ruled. Liberal education prepared the masters to assume rights, duties, privileges and prerogatives of freemen and to assume the posture of a leisure class. Citizens who were trained in this way were taught to be consumers and to enjoy the fruits from the labors of others. In sum, the man who had a liberal education was well rounded, knew how to live the good life, understood philosophical abstractions, appreciated the creative contributions of mankind, understood himself and society and was not concerned with any type of work preparation. Slaves, on the other hand, were trained in the specialized vocations. Having neither rights, privileges nor prerogatives, they served at the pleasure of the masters. They were trained to be producers and, therefore, were the providers of both goods and services. This arrangement continued for centuries.

As liberal education evolved in a democratic society, it threw off some of the shackles of its European origin. While it was no longer a form of education reserved for rulers, and later, aristocrats, it still drew its clientele from the intellectual elite. Its curriculum was subject centered, traditional, determined, and logically organized. The knowledge to be learned was more important than the learner it was supposed to serve. There was more emphasis on intellectual reflection than on human behavior. The learner was trained to produce neither goods nor services. The liberally educated modern man like his predecessor of antiquity is still viewed as one who has no specific skill, is without a vocation and is a servant rathern than a master of technology.

General education, on the other hand, grew out of the democratic experiment, notably Jacksonian Democracy. In essence this meant that education and its institutions should serve all men equally (Rudolph 1962,

p. 203). The clientele of general education is egalitarian. Unlike liberal education, general education is more concerned with the learner than the content (Morse 1964). It emphasizes human behavior and individual differences and growth. The curriculum is a tool to be adapted and applied to the solution of societal problems. While there is no attempt to minimize the intellectual content, the subject matter is never more important than the function it is supposed to serve. As such it must be more flexible.

The current term used to describe general education is "instrumentalist" general education (Simmon 1973, p. 38). While the term may be somewhat new, the descriptors can be characterized as deja vu. "Learner-centered" emphasis on "the development of the total student," and the many other terms and phrases which have been introduced by the social and behavioral sciences are in evidence. "Interdisciplinary", "intergrative", and "interdependent" are also descriptors used to characterize what general education ought to be. Reduced to their lowest terms such labels refer to content which are not identified with a single subject or discipline but content that has some relationship with other subjects. Simmons (1973) agrees that this latter form of general education is preferable to the specialized, survey, introduction types courses which "are really trivial, shallow, less-than-intellectual, and non-motivating" (p. 38). While the arguments offered by Simmons for instrumentalist general education appear equally as superficial as those he criticizes, his attack does demonstrate that there is still no agreement about what general education should be in the two-year college.

The position taken here is that all subjects, whether taught in an interdisciplinary format or a separate subject configuration has a distinguishable relationship to some other subject. This is not necessarily true of liberal education.

Liberal and general education do have different goal orientations, serve a different clientele, emphasize different uses of knowledge, and emerged from dissimilar frames of reference. Notwithstanding, there are important similarities.

The modern student, whether exposed to liberal or general education and regardless of his or her economic conditions, intellectual capacities, racial membership, political inclinations and work involvement confronts a complex society. This student encounters national and local crises, personal triumphs and tragedies, accepts or rejects a cosomology, maybe of any faith or of no faith, and has some conflict with change. In addition, he or she negotiates some bureaucracy, makes some decision, solves some problems, encounters the will of the majority, uses leisure, obeys and ignores some laws, seeks some meaning in existence, identifies some roots, suffers some anxieties, accepts some code of behavior, sets goals, pursues objectives and may become a parent, lover, worker, leader, follower, criminal and so on. Some students will encounter all of the above; others will confront some of the above; no student will escape all of the above. The effect that general or liberal education will have on these phenomena is one of style rather than substance -- a difference in goals, clientele, and emphasis rather than content.

Notwithstanding, even if two-year colleges are sensitive to the similarities between the two forms of education they have been hard pressed to accommodate liberal education to their traditions and their purposes. It is reasoned that there is something singularly inept about a scheme which proposes that only the intellectual elite can profit from the higher education experience. Such an idea places liberal education beyond the control of popular prejudices and passions and assures the further alienation of

the people from the concept. Popular suspicion -- indeed popular misunderstanding -- of liberal education has helped to preclude the achievement of its goals in the community college. It is understandable, therefore, why a clear rationale for general education can be established for the community college.

Rationale

The rationale for the inclusion of general education in the community college curriculum is a simple one. By philosophy, objectives, and activity the community college provides programs for a number of clearly delineated groups of students. Among these groups of students are those pursuing the baccaluareate degree and those developing a special skill (vocational and technical training). It also provides programs for a third group of students who are less clearly delineated -- those involved in continuing education.

Those students seeking the baccalaureate degree actually have their studies organized in many of the traditions of liberal education although they are not provided solely for a select group of students. Students pursuing a terminal degree in vocational and technical have their programs organized according to the speciality of their choice. This configuration is also in the tradition of liberal education. The difference is students in vocational and technical education are their by choice -- not caste.

In another vein, the academically poor students in the two-year college described by Cross (1971) need the content of general education as much as the upper middle class students described by Jencks and Riessman (1968). There is need to consumate theory and practice into the applied, thus confirming and institutionalizing the need for the knowledgable and the useful. Andrew D. White, first president of Cornell, articulates these characteristics a century ago (Account of the Proceedings 1869) (i.e. no second class students,

all courses of study would be equal, etc.). Finally, while the training of citizens over longer periods of their lifetimes or, to use the prevailing jargon, "lifelong learning" is a shift in the goals of many higher education institutions, this type of education has been one of the confirmed goals and institutional practices of community colleges for several decades. Two-year college advocates also recognize and have responded to a community's changing employment pattern which also calls for continuing education and higher levels of training for more people. In order to keep abreast with the expanding need for more education community colleges have found it necessary to increase the alternative choices in the types of training made available and to find ways to provide greater access to larger segments of the population.

There are other reasons why general education is well defined for the community college. First of all, there has been no attempt to insulate it against the social prejudices of the society upon which it depends. Second, it does not indicate to students by inference or otherwise that their intelligence, selection or class membership places only them among the wise and excellent citizens. Third, it rejected meritocracy as the sole criterion for the participation of students in the educative process. In short, the community college goal was to take general education and make the transition from caste to class while at the same time blurring the class lines. One effort of the community college to accomplish this goal was to attempt to remove the higher status and "better than" perception of academic education over vocational education although many practitioners in this institution have sought to permanently sustain the dichotomy regardless of its indefensibility. It is no small measure that the arrogance of such practitioners have driven two-year college people to distraction. In reality,

the belief in the supremacy of academic education was no sooner assured by a short sighted and egocentric elite than it began to be threatened and weakened by the evergrowing complexity of industrialization, technology, specialiation, social, economic and political change. While general education also strives for excellence it has hesitated to use a single criterion as a standard. Although meritocracy is considered a justifiable process for the inclusion or exclusion of participation in the academic enterprise, community college advocates suggest that the process may be flawed.

The Falacy of Meritocracy as the Sole Criterion for Participating in Higher Education

The concept of meritocracy implies that there is a creative minority. Within this group of highly intelligent people who are the academicians, professionals, technicians, artists and managers are the brilliant innovators who, with their ingenuity created monumental contributions to the progress of mankind. The impact of their participation is difficult to over estimate. Yet, it cannot be denied that while merit may not have class boundaries, those who by the force of their intelligence, abilities and particular talents do constitute an elite caste. Those who conceptualize, develop models, formulate strategies, analyze problems, invent, and synthesize phenomena are, indeed, purveyors of progress and, therefore, change. Notwithstanding, these people need implementors. More specifically, they need the collective competence of those who do the work, confront the environment, test the hypotheses, and operationalize the plans. In short, the theoreticians and the practitioners not only coexist but also are interdependent.

This interdependence of the thinkers and the doers does not preclude the possibility that there are individuals within each group who could assume with greater competency the role of an individual in the other group.

This is inevitable since no one has been able to foresee with complete accuracy where ability is going to sprout. One has but to look at many of the intellectual, industrial, political, business, authors, and financial giants of the past and present to confirm this obersvation. Moreover, the drive, motivation, ambition, shrewdness and pursuit of the American dream have provided individuals with the incentives to strive beyond what their predicted abilities would warrant. The refuge of a high and creative intelligence is not the sole possession of those who have provided a quantative demonstration of those attributes. The great dilemma of meritocracy in higher education institutions lies in how it is operationalized. While its advocates seek to select the best students from among the college entrants using quantitative instruments and records of past performance, they surely must recognize that they exclude some of the best who have not distinguished themselves either quantitatively or by their past academic performances. At the same time, in a community college, at least, meritocracy must function within an egalitarian environment. Another problem with meritocracy, and perhaps the major one, is that it limits access. This limitation is one that certain specific groups in the society cannot afford.

The Community College Role in Maintaining Accessibility

It is superfluous to rehearse what is so familiar: the accessibility, the egalitarianism, the second chance, the low cost of education which has animated the growth of the two-year college. Yet, it is precisely these considerations that make the role of general education in the community college so appropriate. What the two-year colleges recognized, almost by instinct, perhaps by accident, and what some more traditional senior

colleges are coming to recognize again, is the immense range and variety of abilities necessary for the efficient functioning of modern society and the potential role of the institution in developing these abilities. These institutions also recognized the futility of attempting to carry on the social arrangements of the past by indulging the extravagance of academic resources concentrated, or wasted on a small segment of the intellectual and social elite. There are, to be sure, sobering qualifications to these generalizations, which give us pause in our criticism of the traditional colleges and our praise of the newer two-year institutions. The traditional colleges did first what the community colleges are doing at present. The American traditional colleges were called on to do almost all the things that a score of institutions did in Europe. In these ways, the early colleges, at least, were the models for two-year colleges.

In the real order colleges in America are general purpose institutions, called on to prepare people for many things: for the professions, for industry, for agriculture, for social work, for business, for remediation, for citizenship and so on. By function they are eclectic. Indeed, general education developed as the foundation of American colleges not withstanding its roots in the old world. Community colleges evolved not merely to fit into the existing scheme of things, continue tradition, support the status quo but to make a contribution to an ever changing society.

In addition to the general purposes that colleges serve, the principle of the ubiquity and universality of talent can be argued; that is, talent is distributed throughout the population. It is neither given, fixed, not the refuge of any single group, sex, race or class. It is a phenomenon to be discovered, encouraged and developed. It follows, then, that there are persuasive practical reasons why the community college can open its doors

to a heterogeneous population and to make the opportunity for individual development accessible to more people.

In providing accessibility to a heterogeneous student mix community college advocates demonstrated that they rejected the idea that when the student comes to the institution he is functionally fixed and cannot be altered, a position that seems to be taken by many traditional colleges. They also questioned many of the hypothesized determinants of environmental deprivation presumed to cause poor intellectual functioning among their students. Another healthy skepticism they hold is that the socio-economic factors which traditional research has shown to effect intellectual functioning can be applied without qualification. More specifically, community college proposes that later environmental influences do affect learning, that students are more resilient than some educators believe, and that early poor academic performance can be overcome by later experience. In sum, the conventional wisdom used by some institutions to deny access to some students to education is the argument that community colleges use for the inclusion of these students.

If mass education and education of the masses as articulated by the nineteenth century educational philosophers and supported by society, almost universally, as a viable concept, then making the opportunity and the process accessible to the masses is a logical expectation. One of the tasks of the educative process is to help the individual to adapt to the society. This does not mean that all education must be the same. It does mean that much of the content must be similar. It does not mean that the "melting pot" is, or ever was, an achieveable goal. It does mean that portions of what is included in the melting pot could be placed in a "salad bowl." In the latter configuration every item, every color and every texture is discernible with the

particular attributes of each preserved. Just as all of the ingredients of the educative process may vary so may the clients. Differences among the clients, in fact, provide the diversity educators claim to prize.

Access is important for other reasons. Minority and poor students have, by intent in some cases, and circumstances in others been excluded from the post-secondary educational experience. This has occurred even when their their resources were used to help pay for the education enjoyed by those in the class hierarchies above them and by racial groups other than their own. It required the direct intervention of government (Brown vs. Topeka; Civil Rights Act of 1964, etc.) to bring some equity to the situation. Open door, open admissions and other strategies have been used to provide greater access to higher education for those students previously denied. While these strategies were used by all types of post-secondary institutions, community colleges, both by philosophy and function, were better equipped to carry out this function. Access helps to maintain a somewhat classless society.

The New Ambiguity

This classless society exists in a unclear environment. General education in contemporary times must be general since the aims and goals of institutions, societies and individuals are less well defined than in the past. In like manner, when aims and goals are established today they are less permanent. Moreover, the objectives of the individual's activity find consensus in a heterogeneous population. Standards of behavior are variant, class structure shifts with income, education, or possessions, the need to adjust to non-responsive government, and discrimination in its various forms call for a kind of education that prepares the individual to live with the new ambiguity; that is, the instability of behavior, shifting

economics, changing aims and goals, little or no conformity, a flexible morality and so on. This new ambiguity is complicated by what can only be described as a dichotomous behavior. While we dream of new worlds and speculate beyond horizons, we cannot see across the street, the inner city, the poor, the aged, and the unemployed. While asking for greater input, citizens simultaneously turn over more of their community decisions to the courts. It appears that doctors take advantage of their patients, lawyers their clients, merchants their customers, educators their students and government, the people. Other parts of the scenario that emerges is not without contradiction. our public servants are our private masters. Racism, sexism, and other inhumane forms of hatred and rejection are manifested as much among the educated as among the unlettered. The answer to helping the student who is not up to standard is to raise the standard. The answer to cleaner air is to relax environmental controls. Poor people are blamed for being poor, if students do not learn, their teachers say it is the students own fault, single parent homes, TV watching and so on.

Psychologists and other less well trained entrepreneurs suggest to a population that they do not know how to like themselves, and others; that they need to clarify their values, identify themselves, learn to enjoy sex, be aggressive, prepare to pass from one stage of life to another and so on. Needs are identified that people do not need and questions are answered that are not asked. At the same time education is supposed to teach people to be independent. In some way it should help the individual to exercise reason, use logic and to apply some systematic approach to the solution of problems.

The desire for education to help the individual use his intellect as a rational way to deal with society is an argument that is compelling. As

we have seen the society does not approach in any way a philosophical ideal. The question is, with the constant bombardment of ambiguity how will the student sort out what is necessary and best for him or herself?

General education advocates have provided us with little empirical data that wiil help answer the question. It is essentially a form of education that has been rooted in philosophy, antedotal appraisals, shoulds and oughts. The broad goals of general education which were designed to help the individual become economically efficient, socially responsible, and capable of making wise choices using the democratic process are no longer enough. The student must also learn how to cope with technology, protect him or herself against exploitation, confront and handle conflict in a culture of ambiguity. The first step in this process is to provide the student with the basic academic skills, that is, skill in reading, writing and mathematical at a level sufficient to function efficiently.

The Need for Basic Academic Skills

General education like other forms has subject matter components believed to be basic to an education. While the subjects taken individually or collectively are the means to develop an education necessary for every person to function, there are prerequisite skills necessary to the understanding for most, if not all, subjects. Reading, for example, is basic to the understanding of all fields. Definition, directions, description, explanation are all chronicled in the printed word. Most of information that will help the individual negotiate the environment is also chronicled in the printed word. Every dimension of human existence has been described in books and other forms of the printed word. While much of the recent attention to the basic skills (especially reading) has been centered in the activities of educational policymakers, a few professional educators at the post-secondary

level and parents with children in the public schools, community college people have been concerned with the problem of teaching the basic academic skills for more than a decade (Roueche, 1967, 1968, 1972; Moore, 1970, 1977, 1978; Clark and Ammons, 1970; and others).

It follows that the student who is unable to read cannot transmit his ideas to others in written form. In fact, he would not recognize his or her own ideas if someone else recorded them. Moreover, the inability to read and write leaves the person with such a deficiency dependent upon others for the transmission, translation and interpretation of what is recorded. Even a reader must feel helpless when confronted with the printed word in a language with which he is unfamiliar.

At the very least every student has a right to read. The fulfillment of this right simultaneously guarantees that student the opportunity to participate in further academic fields where reading skill is the means to understanding the content within those fields. Essentially, we are suggesting here that there are basic skills which are crucial to the components which are basic to an education. Although what the individual needs to know is in an ongoing state of change, the basic academic skills remain constant, a phenomenon that community college people find necessary to continuously emphasize.

The question always arises, should a college be in the business of teaching students how to read and write. And there are more community college people who ask this question than we like to admit. There is also the insistence that a college involved in such activity lowers its standards, waters down the curriculum and is doing the job that should be done at another level of education. It seems a reasonable assumption that any institution that proclaims by philosophy both its desire and ability to

carry out this function would be reflecting the beliefs, values, and commitment of not only the community that supports it but also the staffs that serve it. The college takes its direction from the community. The attendance area of that community is diverse including a large number of students who do not perform academically at a level college attendance would warrant. Notwithstanding, if the community dictates and supports the education for those students, the question is moot.

The charge which deals with the lowering of standards seems also out of place. If practitioners recognize and, indeed, accept the idea that there are individual differences among students, it follows that either the standards or the process of dealing with the learning must be variant. In reality most institutions do not have accurate and consistent standards. The standards for a given course or program differ between institutions, among them, and between and among individual teachers providing instruction in the same subject and within the same department. The insistence that the basic skills should be taught at a lower level is correct. However, since the community college has no control over what happens at other levels of education the preoccupation with what should have happened is not useful.

Having suggested the requisite skills necessary for the student to participate in general education, it now seems reasonable to further examine the role of the community college in general education.

Curriculum Emphasis: The Critical Factor -- Not Content

A stated curriculum has a way of homogenizing what is to be taught. Although a course of study continues to be formulated, serious educators learned a long time ago that attempting to develop a prescriptive curriculum reveals an innocence about the world. Content is not always congenial with the times; and change throws constant doubt on the prescribed categories of knowledge.

Periodically, there is a hue and cry for curriculum change. Similarly, there has been periodic attempts at curricula reform. While some demand something new, others call for a retreat back to the education prescriptions of earlier times. Both positions seem narrow. The chanting for something new as if new is <u>really</u> <u>new</u> or the search for it is perpetually appropriate, should be examined. And calling for the past, a kind of ethnocentrism reminiscent of the earlier classicists, is equally questionable.

Developing typologies which provide for handy and judicious discriminations about what is to be taught and which will please both groups are difficult to formulate. Many constituencies must be served in the development of a curriculum, each is convinced that its proposal is the panacea. There are those who believe that the curriculum should be concerned with the wholesomeness of the intellectual experience. Vocationalists insist that the curriculum should be primarily concerned with, and designed for, the world of work; the futurists maintain that the course of study should be organized to orient the student for change; the purists argue that the curriculum should be subject-centered; those in the behavioral sciences insist that it should be student-centered; and the generalists advocate an interdisciplinary approach. Such restricted positions always create illusions which need a proper perspective. When accurately analyzed all of the points of view reveal some points of accommodation. Notwithstanding, the demands of so many contentious forces and contending egos must be attended. Their arguments can be so extraordinarily consistent that they substitute for what the continuity of their proposals lack. And their debates are so strongly articulated that they cover up their proposal's lack of analysis.

There is no attempt here to prescribe any particular course of study. Instead, some of the existing components of general education will be discussed

with some comment as to how they can be used in the community college. No curriculum is permanent, although certain of its parts may have timeless application.

Curriculum, after all, is a means to goal attainment. But the general education course of study can no longer be defined simply as an institutional mechanism for selecting and delivering a specific sampling of learning experiences and opportunities arranged in a logical and sequential order. While parts of the course of study may do exactly that, the total curriculum experience must transcend the academic recipes used in the past. The technology changes too fast for the prescriptions to have a lasting effect. Similarly, the profile of the clientele varies with the impact of the economic, social, political, and legal forces at work. The institution is called upon to provide information about phenomena it has yet to gather, define and categorize and to provide expertise about areas where there are few, if any, existing successful models. Many of the newer components that will have to be included in the curriculum do not yet have cognitive direction.

In what way, then, does the community college facilitate the interaction with literature, history and philosophy as their own rewards or develop interest in significant debate and analysis of political, scientific and social concerns without simply insisting on the worth and contemporary relevance of such study? More specifically, how does an institution convince the student of the worth of general education with much of its classical liberal arts content? Perhaps one way is not only to emphasize the intrinsic value of such subjects but also to stress their practical value. It may be useful to examine several of the classical subjects, some of their shortcomings, and explore some of their practical implications.

Literature. The worth of literature is well established. One of its major attributes is that it gives pleasure, and even excitement to the reader. Embedded in its various forms is a view of life and an awareness of the nature of man. It demonstrates how he or she faces dilemmas, searches for motives, appreciates beauty and how one handles fear, anxiety, despair, love, hate, conflict and the entire catalog of human emotions and experience. Literature brings the individual in contact with other persons, places and things, giving these individuals, locations and objects definition and description and showing how they affect the physical and psychological aspects of the human condition. In another vein, this subject provides the reader with an explanation of how the men of antiquity and their more primitive predecessors attempted to explain natural phenomena. Literature holds up to the reader the lives of other men and women as role models.

It requires a reasonably sophisticated reader to understand all of these phenomena. And it is not enough to justify the subject to the student on the basis of its permanent and intrinsic worth and excellence; that is, simply maintaining that literature is important because of its very nature, longevity, and value. These are rather abstract concepts. Because of the skill necessary to appreciate some of these abstractions, classical literature requires a student who, at least, has an average reading ability. This reading ability includes a certain mastery of comprehension, the capability of isolating and extracting main ideas, the cognitive apparatus to interpret, the sensitivity to detect subtlety and discriminate, and the ability to gather facts. Many of these skills are above the performance level of a significant number of college students. This is not to imply, however, that many two-year college students are unable to master these skills. Yet, it is precisely these latter

observations which can establish the community college as an institution appropriate for the teaching of literature to a wider student body than would normally have the opportunity to enjoy the subject.

No learning experience can be unmediated. While there may be such a thing as scholarly neutrality, there are also the influences, even pressures of cultural assumptions. Between the subject and the student there are always the intervening partitions of standards, instructional attitudes and biases, change, and the impact of tradition. These latter partitions or variables have caused the community college to evaluate its own achievement as being continually threatened by the resonance of tradition, from which it has broken with such trauma. More specifically, with regard to literature, the academic ruling class in the humanities has continued to question the quality of the subject-matter made available to the student in the community college and the lack of selectivity of the students who are to participate. Two-year college philosophy and objectives reject both of these rationales; and see them as criticisms which mediate the learning process.

There is value in literature for all students. Its lessons, presentations, cautions, excesses, etc., are as instructive for the academically deficient and passive student as they are for the academically talented. The open access of the community college insures that a larger representation of students will have the opportunity to explore literature in a format that they can understand. Few equivalent sympathies have emerged from senior colleges and universities.

What many two-year college advocates want to do, especially some of those in literature, is to demystify the subject; to make it less recondite and less forbidding. Surely such an adaptation makes literature no less significant. Movies and television have demonstrated that people at all levels

can become involved in, and attend to, stories that would not normally be read by a large audience but which, after exposure to that audience, will motivate a significant portion of it to read the story in the original form. Alex Haley's Roots is a case in point. These media have demonstrated that the traditional gulf between the intelligentsia and the "ordinary people" may be narrowing more rapidly than was conceivable only a few decades ago. It is also conceivable that they might one day formidably challenge the credentials and expertise of those who claim to represent the academic authority in literature.

If literature holds something of universal value, then that value is of worth to every student. But there is an important caution; while the subject is essentially about the human enterprise, it does not follow that those who teach it and manage its dissemination are humanistic. The role, then, of general education in the community college generally and in literature in particular, is to free the subject from elitist professors and from the depressing sterility of many (not all) subject-centered college classrooms designed for a select student body and place it with more humane teachers in a flexible learning centered environment organized for a heterogeneous student participation. Literature, after all, is a kind of annuity--whether one invests in it long-term or short-term, he or she always gets a return on that investment.

History. History is another subject traditional to the general education curriculum. Like literature, if it is only taught to students enrolled in a college transfer program, then its great lessons are lost to the masses, many of whom are now victims of its legacy. In a very real sense, history is a form of literature. With its echoes from the past in narrative, it is used to periodically summarize the activities of mankind: thoughts, excesses,

eccentricities, appetites, cruelties, greed, quest for power and need for possessions. These dimensions provide the subject with human content. Unfortunately, history has often been perceived by students as a subject preoccupied with governments, treaties, laws, legislative acts, wars and their heroes, intrigue, economics, political upheaval, periods and movements. Moreover, modern revelations have shown that the subject is caught in the assumptions of its time, that its content may be censored, managed, distorted and even contrived. Both its omissions and the crimes of the wealthy and powerful have been rationalized, and in some cases, romanticized. These things, too, are a part of human behavior. One thing that is striking about history is that it is a subject which appears to be without humor; and humor is a human quality. It is left to the practitioner to bring this dimension to the subject.

It is quite remarkable that much of the human behavior in recorded history has been restricted to outstanding personalities and so little of it appears to focus on "ordinary people." Ordinary people, in fact, appear to be treated only in the broad sweeps by historians. Yet, "the story of Rome (for example) from 509 to 367 B.C. is largely one of the struggle of the plebs to obtain a real voice in the government" (Neill, McGarry and Hobl, 1962, p. 81). This was a struggle which parallels that of the "ordinary people" of today. History can be an academically demanding subject, requiring the student to be able to read, digest, abstract, analyze, synthesize and to conclude on the basis of rational thought. It is an amalgam of subjects embodying politics, geography, anthropology, commerce, economics, religion, law, natural science, literature, art and music, to name just a few of them. Yet, in spite of the volume and complexity of its content, in almost any area and any period one can find parallels in contemporary society. The pages, squires, and knights of feudalism,

for example, can be compared to the undergraduate students, graduate students and full-fledged Ph.D.'s of today. Parallels can also be drawn between the serfs, cottagers and freeholders of the middle ages and tenant farmers, migratory workers, and sharecroppers of today. The middle ages had the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music). These were the liberal arts. Contemporary society has both liberal and general education. The parallels are equally as apparent in commerce. The markets and fairs, merchants, merchant guilds, and hanses would be the shopping centers, small businesses, corporations and conglomerates and unions of today. Even the commercial, religious, economic and territorial expansion of political control during the middle ages can be compared to modern day domination of Russia in parts of Europe and the concept of "manifest destiny" rationalized by the United States shortly after the turn of the twentieth century. The Magna Carta (1215) and the U.S. Constitution are documents proclaiming the same rights to citizens. In sum, history, if presented to the student in forms consistent with his or her own experience, may do more to kindle interest in the student than insisting that the subject is its own reward.

Using this approach to the teaching of history, or other subjects for that matter, often brings the charge from some academicians that the subject is watered down. Yet what is more important is that what is taught is understood, rather than the subject matter being so rigorous that few students understand it. Addiction to the discipline may distinguish the scholar from the instructional practitioner, but it neither diminishes the academic competency of the latter nor his or her methods. So often the academicians demand adherence to undefined standards. Although the academicians' preoccupation with quality is not very illuminating about their standards, it is very instructive about their attitudes. Unfortunately, these critics provide neither prescriptions nor techniques. There is a place for rigor in the subject-matter.

The rigor of history probably has little to do with how difficult it is made for the student to comprehend. The rigor should more properly be in its systematic organization, the objectivity with which it is reported, the thoroughness with which it is evaluated and re-evaluated, and the continuity and documentation of its content. In short, the rigor is in the scholarship: The intellectual honesty to avoid intended omissions which run counter to the historian's biases and the academic competency to minimize the number of misjudgments made in the historical account. Herein lies the science and the art of history. The science is the systematic and scientific approach used in the collection, classifying, checking and rechecking of data; analyzing that data and presenting it in such a way that the study can be replicated. The art of history is the verbal style and approach used in reporting the findings of the study, relating it to the human, social, economic, legal and educational context of which it is a part.

Every individual needs some contact with his or her past. This is as true for students in the community college as it is for those in the university. Moreover, the instruction in the community college is flexible enough to accommodate both the student who is seeking a baccalaureate degree as well as the one who is pursuing a terminal degree in vocational and technical education. The training of efficient workers and the training of enlightened citizens are not mutually exclusive. History serves them both.

After having given two examples of the role and relevance of the community college in providing instruction in particular subjects related to humanities in general education, it may be useful to turn some attention to how the field of science can be included with the humanities as an interdisciplinary approach in the curriculum. Without minimizing the obvious and much emphasized differences between these two fields, it is important to examine how they can function in

such a way that each facilitates the other. The consequence of this approach concerns the possible impact such a merging of the two fields has on curricular innovation. A sunrise and a spring day are occasions not only for descriptive rhetoric, but they are also opportunities for scientific explanation.

Science. This discipline, of course, brings to the educational experience of the student the scientific approach to problem solving. Even the non-science students encounter and must solve problems. Science is not objectively neutral in application although its process may be. Most problems today call for the collaboration of natural science, social science and the humanities. Because the solution to many of our technical problems will have an impact on the human environment, politicians and other decision makers have increasingly turned to the processes utilized in the social and behavioral sciences to aid in getting a consensus from the people regarding the acceptance and application of the solution. Similarly, they have also found that requisite knowledge and information from the humanities have been necessary to shape a coherent, usable world view. In a word, science is not in a world of its own, isolated from the influences of other forces. In the recent past, in fact, some students have been outspoken in their criticism of the fragmented, departmentalized image and character of higher education. Their dissatisfaction has been exacerbated by the prevailing practices which preclude a significant number of students enrolled in the humanities, for example, from taking science courses. The argument has been that students enrolled in science courses should demonstrate an established competency level and aptitude that would help to enhance their success. Moreover, it is emphasized that some students in the two-year college who may lack some academic rigor, could succeed in the non-scientific courses, could not succeed in the science programs. Such students, it is argued, would require the dilution of the courses to such an extent that standards

would become meaningless and the quality would be seriously diminished. These arguments and charges of anti-intellectualism will not go away although they contradict in some measure the open-door philosophy of the community college and imply that the instruction in this institution is of a lesser quality.

From a logical and practical point of view, it seems unnecessarily protective and elitist to isolate the scientific disciplines not only from each other and other disciplines, but also from the real world. Life, as we know and live it, cannot be served efficientiy by a collection of disciplines operating one at a time. The man who has a particular illness may need a doctor, pharmacist, priest, novelist, counselor, insurance man, nurses aide, lawyer and psychiatrist to name just a few of the persons who will help to make him mentally, physically, emotionally, and socially free of illness. These areas of specially trained people represent both science and the humanities. In fact, it is common practice, in hospitals today, to use the team approach in the treatment of illness. To argue by analogy is, of course, often flawed. It is probably more accurate to note that most of the problems encountered by the students in community colleges, other institutions, and, indeed, society have compatible implications for both science and the humanities.

The student clientele served by the community college is a heterogeneous one. While a definite segment of that clientele may demonstrate both an aptitude and preference for science, the entire student body can benefit from the experience with the science curriculum. Education is supposed to do something for the student. And while the student may not understand the excessively tidy, verbal and abstract language of science as it is chronicled in many of the textbooks used, which are written above his reading level, the principles of science apply to each student--whether he or she is a competent reader or not.

It is important, therefore, that some of those principles be presented at an understandable level. If this process is considered to be "watering down" the subject matter, then, from the point of view of the writer, such a process is exemplary. It is academic snobbery to suggest that the community college student's encounter with science be viewed as that of a simple plebeian entering an intellectual milieu. A better view would be that of seeing science as providing the student with experiences which will expand his mind, order his thinking and make his existence less provincial. Ideally, the student brings something to the learning experience and takes something from it.

There is no denial of the intellectual power of specialization. There is, however, a need to accommodate a more broadly based perspective as institutions strive for ways to develop curricular patterns which must be exposed to a cross section of the student body. The role of the community college is to facilitate that exposure.

Vocational Education and General Education

There is still the tendency to think of vocational education in terms of certain historic trades and occupations such as carpentry, baking, and farming. The labels have remained unchanged but the content and skills are quite different. Because the names have remained the same and we relate them to past understandings of these vocations, both the vocations and their practitioners are stereotyped. This is ironic. The materials, tools, methods, and training processes have all changed. Much of what was understood before is now out of date and out knowledge of it is no longer applicable.

The changes in vocational education and rising technology have resulted in higher productivity and in a higher standard of living. These conditions have not only translated into higher expectations but have simultaneously produced a longer life expectancy, more leisure time and more conspicuous

consumption. With these human and material rewards have come a demand for social justice and the pursuit of individual satisfaction. Moreover, they have placed the individual in a different relationship with his education and his work. This new relationship may not be a symbiotic one but it is certainly an interdependent one. The failure to understand this relationship may be a part of the reason that there is the tendency to maintain the dichotomy between vocational and general education.

The stereotyped perception of the vocational worker is that this was a person who worked only with his hands because he or she was unable to perform successfully in academic subjects. Such a person was thought to be unable to carry out cognitive activities. Acceptance of this obvious contradiction has led both lay and professionals to behave as though such a perception was accurate. As a result, many vocational curricula have little or no general education content. Yet both the mathematician and the mechanic serve multiple roles.

Even a cursive observation of today's farmer, for example, demonstrates that this person needs some skill in economics. But the need for economics by the farmer is only one example where a particular worker needs the knowledge of a field that has traditionally not been provided for him or her. Economics, in fact, is one of those subjects many two-year vocational college students are not encouraged to study. It is probably fair to say that a significant number of those students, without encouragement, avoid the discipline. Some of them would say the subject is too difficult. Yet, almost every facet of their lives is affected by it. Where and how the student lives, what he or she purchases, rents, owns and leases, the education sought, health care available, the transportation used, the assessments accepted (taxes, interest, etc.) and even the student's attitude toward other persons, places, things and ideas can all

be directly and indirectly related to the subject of economics. The immediate validity of the subject lies in its application to everyday problems in the individual's life. The problem is that while the subject of economics has such broad application, it is taught as though the everyday student is going to be an economist, scholar and researcher in the field. Perhaps no other subject has more direct application for the student than this one. Each evening the mass-media bombards us with relentless referrals to the country's economic health. We are told about the employment and unemployment rate, the change in interest rates, the cost of the basic necessities, about the future probability of labor problems and so on. And while there are economic theoretical constructs underlying many of these revelations, those who are affected most by them, regardless of their type of work, do not always understand the complexities of the economic conditions. There are always human consequences of economic policy. This becomes even more significant in view of the many examples where economic theory cannot explain the numerous anomalies in reality. This is simply another notation that phenomena inconsistent with classical theory are not legion. Moreover, the professional economists appear to agree on very little and seem more often wrong than right in their predictions. It seems a reasonable assumption that those who are affected by the economic forces could profit from a better understanding of these forces in terms which they can understand. This is not a situation applicable to some students--it applies to them all.

Students enrolled in vocational education will share many of the future important decisions with those who are enrolled in college transfer programs. Another way of emphasizing this point is to note that workers, managers, and professionals share not only similar decisions but are often required to share the same decision. Jury duty is an important example. When men and women of

different racial groups, social classes, political persuasions, economic levels, and religious beliefs must reach consensus, it does not serve the goal of the task they must carry out when specific members of that body must rely on the Judeo-Christian absolutes (things are delineated in clearly defined blacks and whites), approaches which have the forces of tradition behind them. If an individual has only his value system to rely on, he does not have the requisite skill which will help him or her render a fair, rational and just decision. This individual nonetheless shares the decision with those who may have knowledge of how the system works, and understands the how and why his or her contribution to the process is important.

The elective process and the will of the majority in other democratic processes requires the participation of both the trades person and the professional. Both the cost of government and its accountability lie in the consensus of the governed. Social justice is still another aspect of the human condition where the collective decisions of all facets of the society must participate if its goals are realized. It follows therefore, that the content of general education is not only of use in the area of vocational education but also it is essential.

In another vein, to restrict the educational activities of the student to only those experiences related to the specific job for which the person is being prepared, ignores the other talents, interests and appetites the individual might possess. In some cases the job itself may require more than one talent. Certainly the ironworker must have some artistic talents. While the philosopher may contemplate and attempt to find meaning to beauty, the writer may attempt to describe it, the ironworker, like the artist he is, must produce objects of beauty. The community college educates future philosophers, writers and ironworkers. Graduates must give concrete expression to their particular skills.

There is little or no reason, however, that each of the students should not be educated with and knowledgeable about, the content of the field of the other.

There seems a reluctance to mix vocational and general education. One reason is that the perception prevails that vocational students are somehow different from those whose goals are to earn baccalaureate degrees. This is a perception both inside and outside the community college. In a Fortune Magazine editorial, November 1969, Max Ways wrote,

> . . . the belief spreads that people with high education achievement [college degrees] lead lives that are in other than material ways superior (more useful, more interesting) to those of people with low educational achievement. This is why academic and other highly educated people, though they may believe that plumbers earn more money, seldom try to persuade their sons to become plumbers--and it is why many plumbers' sons enter professions.

The financial retrenchment of the 1970s, unfortunately exacerbates this belief in many ways. While some suggest that an occupational education is more important than a general education, others have demanded more, rather than less rigidity in the educational system: separate the vocational education from general education; higher standards for everybody without regard to individual differences and past performances; less freedom of choice; emphasis on the basic academic skills and little on important programs designed to encourage social interaction which will prepare them more adequately for existence in a complex society. These narrow views ignore some of the causes of the unprecedented rebelliousness of college-age students of just a few years ago.

One would expect the educators to sustain their reason in the face of irrationality. Reason dictates that the student must have a broader education than simply vocational skills. Reason suggests it is better to provide skills which help the student participate in the society in a responsible way than to deny him or her those skills and be subjected to the participation and

decisions of uninformed persons. Reason would suggest situational ethics are untenable. Reason should permit us to demonstrate to the student that what he learns in general education may help him deal with the conflicts in his daily life: the contradiction in the super patriot; the "Bible belt" hypocrisy with its "born again" Christians with their in-house bigotries; the elaborate system of exceptions and compromises; and the self-exploration of the bricklayer and the philosopher. What better institution than the community college to apply this reason.

In fifty years, vocational education has changed from a manual arts curriculum widely used in the secondary schools to one that is highly specialized and is housed in high schools, community colleges, technical colleges, and other senior colleges and universities. This change has confronted educational institutions with challenges and crises undreamed of by those who passed the Smith-Hughes Act (1917), and those educators who implemented the programs. It is not necessary to endorse this new configuration to recognize the profound changes in many sectors of vocational education. These changes have, in many ways, sharpened rather than blunted the tensions between vocational and general education and have helped to bring about education disorganization. It seems clear that if the methods which we already know are not used to reduce the tensions, an increased polarization in the educational community can take place.

There is always conflict between heritage and change. The heritage of vocational education in America, now five decades old, was to keep it from being dominated by college preparation. And the heritage of liberal education (the core of general education) was to prepare and sustain an unproductive few. The conflict and change lies in the emergence of the new form which collapses the goals of both into a single set of goals embodying important aspects of both.

There is a kind of double marginality for the vocational student. This type of education is not considered the most desirable and even when there is exposure to general education it is in the form of a minimum number of college hours and usually only in the form of electives. Once identified as a student in vocational education, the expectancies of the faculty members in other areas than his own, is less than that of students from the transfer program. Every student has potentialities to be developed. How they are developed depends not only on the adaptability of the institution and its agents. It is a natural consequence that if neither of these are able or willing to make the necessary adjustment, those potentialities of the student may not reach fruition. The continuity of events which are linked to the educative process cover a wide range of considerations. And the meaning of events depend on the context in which they occur. The educational environment is one such context and should do something for the student. In like manner, the action, reaction and interaction of the student with his/her teachers should do something for both parties. In sum, the task of educating, as we have suggested, is a human enterprise.

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